

Maintaining the Cutting Edge

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Editorial

MAINTAINING THE CUTTING EDGE

Fall 2012

Civil War scholarship remains on the cutting edge as historians continue to seek new ways to explore the terrible conflict while “celebrating” its passing 150 years later. Whether treading over old territory with new modes for studying the war or using new methods to discover entirely fresh aspects with which we can achieve a better understanding of this complex and enduring event, historians continue to provide new and renewed examinations that provide for thoughtful conversation. In this, the Fall issue of *Civil War Book Review*, we feature four works that highlight new avenues for Civil War study and suggest new routes for further examination in the future as we continue to analyze those four grueling years while we continue down the road of Civil War scholarship toward the Bicentennial in the not-terribly-distant future.

Our Photographic feature for the observance of the Civil War Sesquicentennial shows Private Francis E. Brownell, member of the 11th New York Infantry and recipient of the Medal of Honor (the first to obtain this honor during the war) for his role in killing Confederate sympathizer, James W. Jackson, who had shot Colonel Elmer E. Ellsworth.

Our feature reviews this quarter begin with Andre Fleche’s *The Revolution of 1861: The American Civil War in the Age of Nationalist Conflict*, which expands the scope of the Civil War into a broader perspective for analysis. Placing the war in an international context, we better understand what the war meant to the overall flow of history and developments across the globe as Confederates adopted aspects of European nationalist movements. Next, Walter Stahr has provided a magnificent new study of one of the political giants of the period in *Seward: Lincoln’s Indispensable Man*. This updated look at William Seward helps to explain the challenging months around secession and Civil War while providing new clues to some of the mysteries that have surrounded him for decades. Clayton Jewett has compiled a wide-ranging collection of essays that explore many thoughtful and exploratory topics, ranging from “Race and Warfare in the South” to “Memory and the American Civil War.” Many prominent historians have gathered together to contribute to this impressive

assortment in *The Battlefield and Beyond: Essays on the American Civil War*. Finally, Yael A. Sternhell, in *Routes of War: The World of Movement in the Confederate South*, has provided some of the cutting edge Civil War scholarship that helps to move us along in our greater understanding of that moment in time. By examining the role that roads and the concept of movement played in how southerners, both black and white, experienced the war should pique our interest and urge us to seek other new mediums for wartime studies.

Professor William J. Cooper graciously sat with us to discuss his new book, *We Have the War Upon Us: The Onset of the Civil War, November 1860-April 1861*, a massively important work that explores the months between Lincoln's election and the first shots at Fort Sumter. By exploring how the politicians interacted with one another in their attempts (and subsequent failure) to stave off the conflict, we can more easily understand the complexity of these relationships and the sectional crisis during which they endured.

Michael Taylor has contributed again in a masterful way with his essay on a Civil War surgeon from Iowa. Literally, on the cutting edge of scholarship, this examination of Dr. John Eastman helps us to achieve a clearer picture of how soldiers experienced the war, suffering from disease and deprivation, with a fear almost as strong as that which they felt when facing the enemy on the battlefield.

As my time as editor of *Civil War Book Review* winds to a close (my final issue will appear in Winter 2013), I cannot begin to thank those who have contributed to the journal during my time. The reviewers, publishers, authors, and-most of all-the readers who make the efforts of all the rest worthwhile, have continuously made this experience one of enjoyment and great importance. *Civil War Book Review* would like to thank the support of everyone, including the LSU Libraries for their continued help in making this a successful venture.